In the Claims:

1. (currently amended) A method for arbitrating bandwidth in a communications switch, comprising:

a) generating a repeating data frame having a plurality of rows;

b) making requests during row N for space in row N+1; and

c) granting the requests through an out-of-band link.

2. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein:

each request includes through-the-switch routing information and priority level information.

3. (previously presented) A method according to claim 2, wherein said switch is a multistage switch, said method further comprising:

d) buffering the request at each stage of the switch;

e) discarding low priority requests when the buffer reaches a threshold.

4. (original) A method according to claim 3, wherein:

said step of granting requests includes returning requests which have not been discarded before reaching the egress of the switch.

5. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein:

each request for space is for a 52-byte chunk of space.

6. (original) A method according to claim 5, wherein bandwidth is arbitrated among ATM cells and variable length packets, said method further comprising:

d) segmenting each packet larger than 52-bytes into a plurality of 52-byte chunks.

7. (original) A method according to claim 6, wherein:

each request includes through-the-switch routing information and priority level information.

8. (previously presented) A method according to claim 7, wherein said switch is a multistage switch, said method further comprising:

e) buffering the request at each stage of the switch;

f) discarding low priority requests when the buffer reaches a threshold.

9. (original) A method according to claim 8, wherein:

said step of granting requests includes returning requests which have not been discarded before reaching the egress of the switch.

10. (original) A method according to claim 9, further comprising:

g) discarding requests for all following segments of a packet when a request for one segment of the packet has been discarded.

11. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein:

said requests are made in-band.

12. (original) A method according to claim 1, wherein:

said requests are made out-of-band.

13. (currently amended) An apparatus for arbitrating bandwidth in a communications switch, comprising:

a) means for generating a repeating data frame having a plurality of rows;

b) means for making requests during row N for space in row N+1; and

c) means for granting the requests through an out-of-band link.

14. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 13, wherein:

each request includes through-the-switch routing information and priority level information.

15. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 14, further comprising:

d) means for buffering the request at each stage of the switch; and

e) means for discarding low priority requests when the buffer reaches a threshold.

16. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 15, wherein:

said means for granting requests includes means for returning requests which have not been discarded before reaching the egress of the switch.

17. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 13, wherein:

each request for space is for a 52-byte chunk of space.

18. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 17, wherein bandwidth is arbitrated among ATM cells and variable length packets, said apparatus further comprising:

d) means for segmenting each packet larger than 52-bytes into a plurality of 52-byte chunks.

19. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 18, wherein:

each request includes through-the-switch routing information and priority level information.

20. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 19, further comprising:

e) means for buffering the request at each stage of the switch; and

f) means for discarding low priority requests when the buffer reaches a threshold.

21. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 20, wherein:

said means for granting requests includes means for returning requests which have not been discarded before reaching the egress of the switch.

22. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 21, further comprising:

g) means for discarding requests for all following segments of a packet when a request for one segment of the packet has been discarded.

23. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 13, wherein:

said requests are made in-band.

24. (previously presented) An apparatus according to claim 13, wherein:

said requests are made out-of-band.